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Near to H-Bomb?

Peking May Have a Surprise for Us

LONDON, Nov. 18 (UPI) — Red China was reported today to be nearer to exploding a hydrogen device than previously had been thought feasible by the West or Russia.

Diplomatic reports reaching here said the Chinese, to all appearances, have reached the technical stage in nuclear development which immediately precedes a hydrogen explosion. They exploded their first crude nuclear device last month.

BY 2 OR 3 YEARS

Chinese scientists are believed to have cut the time lag between a first nuclear explosion and a hydrogen test possibly by two or three years.

Air samplings made after Peking's first nuclear explosion Oct. 16, were said to have disclosed the presence of Uranium 235, and not plutonium. This, it was said, is the stage

which immediately precedes a hydrogen explosion.

The authoritative British Institute for Advanced Studies ~~said other powers have not~~ succeeded in producing Uranium 235 without a gaseous diffusion plant.

REAL ACHIEVEMENT

Red China has constructed such a plant, it said, or conceivably has succeeded in building a gas centrifuge. Either alternative, the Institute said, would be "an industrial achievement of a higher order."

A third possibility, in the institute's view, is that China used the method of electromagnetic separation, abandoned by the U.S. as far back as 1944.